

Award

THINKSPACE Culture of Curiosity

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LOCATION
288 Church Street, Toronto, Ontario

OWNER/DEVELOPER
Ryerson University

ARCHITECT/LEED CONSULTANT
Perkins and Will

CONSTRUCTION MANAGER
Eastern Construction Company Limited

STRUCTURAL CONSULTANT
WSP Canada Inc.

MECHANICAL CONSULTANT
MCW Consultants Ltd.

ELECTRICAL CONSULTANT
Crossey Engineering Ltd.

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT
dtah

TOTAL SIZE
332,604 square feet

TOTAL COST
\$110 million

Daphne Cockwell Health Sciences Complex – Ryerson University

by **ROBIN BRUNET**

New urban university buildings have always served as catalysts for neighbourhood improvement, and that’s the case with Ryerson University’s mixed-use Daphne Cockwell Health Sciences Complex, which is also a hub for interdisciplinary collaboration, housing health science programs such as midwifery, nursing, nutrition, and occupational and public health.

Perkins and Will Canada designed the facility to appear as a series of shifting, stacked volumes, with the base building being eight storeys for academic, classroom, and program space as well as an 18-storey residence tower to house 332 students. The complex also features a green roofscape, a state-the-art creative technology lab, and a learning and teaching centre.

Paul Chung, senior project manager for Ryerson’s Facilities Management and Development, points out that Ryerson University occupies one of the fastest growing neighbourhoods in Toronto. While enrolment has increased roughly 50 percent in the last nine years with new programs putting tremendous pressure on the University to expand, limited real estate constrained its ability to do so.

Chung explains, “We owned property on the corner of Church Street and Dundas Street, which was an old parking lot, and we decided to design a building on it that would consolidate four of our schools from the Faculty of Community Services. The project

really kicked off in 2011 when the provincial government granted us \$56.4 million in funding.”

Ryerson gave the architects some key visioning statements. “We wanted a distinct identity with an academic podium and retail at ground level, and a residential tower for students,” says Chung.

The team at Perkins and Will applied a unique mindset to Daphne Cockwell, making it “a vertical campus that celebrates density and urbanity.”

Andrew Frontini, principal at Perkins and Will, says, “the design’s success was the direct result of six months of sessions and workshops with all the stakeholders, from students and faculty to even community members. From this, we got the idea that the complex should be animated and lively, super-engaging and very visible, with connections between the users, the campus, and the city.”

Frontini goes on to note that “We broke down the large mass of the building, splitting the tower and the podium to articulate a continuous public realm – a pathway is visible from the ground floor to the top of the tower, expressed with a bold colour.”

Additionally, Frontini created an atrium space that runs the full width of the building, from Church to Bond streets. “This would enable safe pedestrian flow and further break down the scale of the complex,” he explains.

For this facility, Perkins and Will created a high-performance envelope



consisting of maximum 40 percent glazing, contrasting solid volumes with punched windows against the more transparent zones that highlight the atria and internal street.

Ground broke on the project in late 2015 under the construction management delivery model, and Chung points out that “we began a long building process just as Toronto was about to experience three years of record rain, snow, and ice. Everyone had planned for adverse weather, but some days we had no choice except to shut down.”

However, he adds that, “our construction manager developed great sequencing, and so the building process was relatively smooth despite this being a very tight site, requiring just-in-time deliveries. The complex was constructed right to the property lines, so there was lots of preloading, lots of co-ordination with the cranes – and constant fill-up and removal of bins.”

Frontini says, “Eastern Construction Company did not have an easy time of it. Credit should also be



given to WSP Canada Inc. for working through complicated transfers necessitated by elements such as building cantilevers and a large column-free auditorium positioned below the shear-wall-constructed tower.”

Daphne Cockwell Health Sciences Complex is a valuable addition to an evolving part of Toronto, and Chung concludes, “it will help improve the efficiency of our campus, and we think it will spearhead a neighbourhood revitalization: in fact, derelict buildings in the vicinity are being redeveloped as we speak.” **A**

RENDERINGS BY PERKINS AND WILL/PHOTOGRAPHY BY BRIAN BATISTA, BETTECOURT/COURTESY RYERSON UNIVERSITY